

QuestBusters

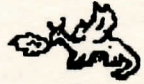
TM

The Adventurer's Newsletter

December, 1984



Dragonworld



Based on characters from the novel of the same name, Dragonworld was produced by the book's authors, Byron Preiss and Michael Reaves, at Byron Preiss Video Publications. It's the story of a "young dreamer" named Amsel, who travels to the land of Simbala on a mission to rescue the Last Dragon from an unknown enemy that has drugged and kidnapped him. The presentation is drastically different from previous graphic adventures. Instead of each location appearing as a full-screen illustration, several parts of a scene are depicted in one to three small color pictures at the top of the screen. Below, text fills 14 lines. Sometimes all 14 are used for a single description, much more than usual in graphic games. A more subtle difference is that the clues are all hidden in the text, not in the pictures.

One of the three pictures might show Amsel, while the other two depict parts of a room. When you examine something, one of the pictures often disappears and is replaced with another subject. Occasionally, two or even all three are combined for a panoramic effect. It's an interesting innovation, and the result is that Dragonworld has the feel of an illustrated all-text game. This is natural, since Preiss made his mark by publishing "illustrated novels" of noted science fiction authors, and the book upon which this game is based featured graphics inset into the text.

Another interesting feature is the availability of several routes to key locations. If, like a genuine pinhead, you untie the boat in the first



You and Hawkwind are standing in the ruins of an ancient villa. West of you is what was once the atrium. Rising from the rubble you see a jade statue of a tree. You see roads to the north and south.

Dragonworld's graphics are smaller than in this photo, and there are 14 text lines.

scene without getting in it first, it floats away and leaves you with no transportation to Simbala. But you can swim, it turns out, and use a magic orb called the Dragonpearl to teleport to safety when death by drowning seems almost certain. In other parts of the game, there are several paths to important locations, so you won't run into as many gamestopping stone walls. Inventory management is no problem, because you can carry an unlimited number of objects. And though coldrakes (deadly dragons once ruled by the Last Dragon) and the assassins of Castle Doomhaven may attack, it's not easy to get killed in Dragonworld. That doesn't mean it is totally impossible, and there's no instant reincarnation when you do get killed.

There are plenty of places to visit after crossing the Strait of Balomar, and a minimal

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Adventure Hotline

Ultima fans will have to hang on a while longer. Dave Albert at Origin Systems says that Ultima IV: Avatar, originally set for Christmas, is behind schedule and may not be out until March. "It just keeps growing and getting more complex," he explained. Penultimate will probably make it out the door in January. This role-playing game has an Oriental setting that's appropriate for the martial arts combat scenes featuring a pair of animated figures. Albert says the magic system has been totally revamped on the game, designed by Greg Malone, who did Minit Man (a shoot-'em-up) for Penguin. It will be available for Apple first, then C-64, PC and Macintosh. The Mac Ultima III is still due in early '85.

Stuart Smith, who wrote Ali Baba and The Return of Heracles, just finished Adventure Construction Set for Electronic Arts. It's supposed to enable anyone to design graphic and text adventures. We'll review it in January.

There is some good news on the sequel front: Transylvania II, officially titled Crimson Crown, is on the way from Penguin. Apple version first, as always, though no date has been set. After nearly a year, a graphic adventure called RingQuest (Apple) is ready for production. The Sword of Kadash is next, a cross between fantasy role-playing and action. You control a character in real-time animated action, exploring a trap-lined, puzzle-filled, creature-infested, 220-room castle. Mark Pelczarski says it's the first of 4-5 new graphic games they'll release next year, all boasting a full-sentence parser. They'll be programmed with COMPREHEND, Penguin's new adventure language and development system.

Spinner's shipped its first Windham Classics titles. Swiss Family Robinson was done by Tom Snyder and has a built-in mapping system, help key and other features for players 10 and older. Below the Root is another graphic adventure, but this one

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DRAGONWORLD

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1]

amount of mapping will be required. (The program fills both sides of three disks.) After meeting up with Hawkwind, a Simabala monarch, you'll journey to Kandesh. Armorers, tailors, alchemists and other merchants await, and you've got to collect the correct gear before proceeding. There's plenty of lively music (especially for Commodore owners) in numerous scenes, and three animated action games are part of the overall scenario. All can be played with joystick or keyboard control.

AN ANIMATED MAZE

The first, "Bogs and Bats," is a slow-motion shoot-'em-up that's a complete waste of time. Three or four waves of bats attack, but you wind up with the same result whether they're all killed or not -- you and don't have to even play this mini-game to complete the adventure. The other two are more crucial. "Dragonstones" is a gambling game in the Kandesh bazaar. Colored stones fall from the top, and you must move a cursor to hit the right ones. It's fairly simple, and you've got to win enough tsalmas to buy all the necessary equipment. "The Maze of Madness" is the trickiest, and must be completed in order to reach the Last Dragon's place of captivity. A tiny figure must be guided up and down randomly disappearing stairs and through the maze. If he slips off the side, you have to start over at the bottom. It's also the only one of the three that is interesting as an arcade-style game and will have to be practiced. (There's a "practice" option for all three.) All three are leagues ahead of the pair of action games included in Penguin's Coveted Mirror.

Like Earthly Delights, this game's most interesting aspect is the text itself. It conjures up an atmosphere that's truer to the feel of fantasy fiction than 99% of role-playing or adventure games. The world of Simabala doesn't seem real, but the story makes you want to believe it could exist. The parser is the weak point, and occasionally takes its sweet time analyzing commands. This is

especially true when multiple commands are entered simultaneously. Once, it didn't understand "run," even though the word appears in the manual's extensive vocabulary list. (Trillium says this was a programming oversight that's being fixed in future releases.) It accepts fairly complex sentences, but responds, "Please try rephrasing that" if it doesn't understand your command. (This isn't as helpful as parsers that point out where the problem lies.) In fact, the parser functions exactly like the one in Ultrasoft's Mask of the Sun. Trillium licensed Ultrasoft's graphic language, ULTRA III, as they are distributing that company's Shadowkeep. But they say the other programs were developed with a language/system called SAL, and don't use the Ultrasoft parser. However, the typeface looks identical, it parses the same, and we'd be interested to know what others who've play Sun or Serpent's Star think after using the Trillium parser. The parsing is better than most graphic adventures, however, especially the Sierra and Sirius games. Players spoiled by Infocom may be disgruntled.

Though the Trillium theory of adventure games consists of replacing object-oriented logic problems with "character-based situations," there's really not much difference. You're still grabbing up gems, crystals and swords, breaking down doors and so on. When it's necessary to talk with other characters, you can only say "ask woman" or "talk prince." Admittedly, you must "act in character" with Amsel in a few scenes, not manipulate objects, and the effort to emphasize characterization is strongest in this Trillium title. If you're a fan of fantasy literature, can cope with the parser, and don't want to spend three months looking for a can of grue repellent, you may enjoy a trip to Dragonworld. SA

Computer: APPLE, COMMODORE 64

Planned Conversions: MACINTOSH

Skill Level: Novice

Saves: 10 (on separate disk)

Price: \$39.95, Apple. \$32.95, Commodore

Manufacturer: Trillium Corp.

EARTHLY DELIGHTS

Like Suspects (though this game actually preceeded it), Delights doesn't cast you as a detective or policeman. Instead, you're the victim of a burglary. A wealthy uncle has just died and left you nothing but a work of art, named "Earthly Delights" by the obscure artist who painted it. In his will, the uncle left instructions that you "never part with her." You get suspicious when a mysterious individual drops by that afternoon and offers \$75,000 for the painting, and refuse to sell. But then a burglar breaks into your house during the night and steals it.

The all-text presentation is divided into five chapters, the first called "A Noise in the Night." Depending on your reaction to that noise, you may or may not have a run-in with the thief. You can't defeat the karate-trained burglar, but will easily find a clue he accidentally leaves behind. This leads you to Paris, where chapter two begins. Descriptions are detailed and colorful as you wander down the boulevards of Paris. Old men in berets, countless poodles, and other citizens pop up now and then and stroll down the street, but you don't really get to talk or interact with most of them. The layout of the town is a lot like that of the real city, and you'll get to visit the Eiffel Tower, the Louvre, the Folies-Bergere, the Montmartre district and Napoleon's tomb. In one place, you learn that an exhibit of paintings by the creator of "Earthly Delights" was recently stolen. It turns out to be the work of a gang of international criminals with a master plan straight out of a James Bond movie.

You can get on-line help, and clues appear as literary quotes from Robert Frost, Victor Hugo, and other classic authors and poets. Sometimes they're clear, other times the hints are vague. In Paris, for example, Hemingway advises that "Paris is a movable feast." They never offer a straightforward answer as Priority Software's Forbidden Quest does. Punctuation symbols are employed to sketch lo-res graphics in a few scenes.

In Chapter One, your apartment's floor plan is displayed, which means you don't have to map this area. Simple sound effects are also included.

The parser is the noun-verb type usually seen only in graphic games, so communicating with the program is more of a task than with the Infocom games or even Epyx's Robots of Dawn or the Trillium titles. In fact, it's one of the clumsiest we've seen in this year's crop of adventures, and isn't much of an improvement over the early Scott Adams' games. You can question people, though, by saying things like: "Ask burglar about plan." The vocabulary seems fairly extensive. But if your command doesn't make sense, the program sometimes answers, "I'll try to do what I think you meant." -- and rarely gets it right.

You can move in the standard eight directions, plus in, out, up, and down, and indicate these with abbreviations. The IBM's function keys are available for commands like picking up and examining objects and checking your inventory. You can also get hard-copy of the game, convenient for studying at your leisure. Earthly Delights' best feature, in fact, is its readability. The prose is well-written, and describes reasonably interesting problems. No points are awarded for solving them, so you're never sure of exactly how much progress has been made at any stage, except when you make it to the next chapter. The chapter-by-chapter structure gives it the feel of real interactive fiction, but there's no emphasis on the characters as in Cutthroats. Some people may like the ability to freely roam the streets in search of clues, instead of being pretty much confined to a house as in Infocom's mysteries. It can't compare with Suspect, but hardened "disk drive detectives" may get a few kicks from cracking this case. NY

Computer: Apple, IBM PC, PCjr and MS-DOS
Skill Level: Novice/Intermediate
Saves: 5 (on game disk)
Price: \$29.95
Manufacturer: Datamost, Inc.

SUSPECT

Zork-style adventures, staged in fantastic settings where magic prevails, seem to have peaked in popularity. While Infocom intends to complete the Sorcerer trilogy, they are concentrating on science fiction and contemporary stories. Hitchhiker's Guide and the "Tales of Adventure" series are prime examples. Mysteries have also become a hot ticket, and Dave Lebling's Suspect is his first "disk drive detective" game. But there's a twist this time: you're not a detective.

An absorbing work of "interactive fiction," the story takes place at a Halloween costume party at the Ashford-Wellman estate in Maryland's Montgomery County. Veronica Ashford, a friend of sorts, invited you to attend, and your editor told said to try and get a story out of it for the newspaper. Little does he realize the headline will read: REPORTER ARRESTED FOR MURDER.

Like the rest of the blue bloods in her social circle, Veronica deplures the way the suburbs are encroaching on the neighborhood. They've even formed a loose coalition to persuade landowners not to sell out to developers who might replace the ritzy mansions with rows of townhouses. Incongruously, two real estate men, Bill Cochrane and Samuel Ostmann, were invited to the party. In the ballroom, where the party is already in full swing (with a live band and a generous bartender), you must chat with each of the guests to find out who hides behind the extravagant costumes. There's an African Explorer, a Werewolf, an Astronaut...and you are dressed as a Cowboy.

SLINGING SINGAPORES

Veronica immediately spills a Singapore Sling on her white dress and dashes off to remove the stain. Each turn consumes a minute (the story begins at 9 PM), and you can spend the next two hours just socializing and wondering when she'll return. Then Sergeant Duffy appears and holds you with an "iron grip" until an anonymous detective

arrests you for killing her. A paragraph explains that the lariat and a bullet from your costume were found near the body. Though convicted, you are ultimately freed after Duffy and the detective conduct a more thorough investigation.

So you restart the game and start looking for the scene of the crime, determined to solve it before Duffy arrests you again. After all, you're a reporter and smell a Pulitzer Prize-winning story behind this murder. Be sure to bring along plenty of paper, for the sprawling house is much larger than the one in Witness and even bigger than Deadline's Robner mansion. One convenient feature



Veronica



Marston

has been added: you can type "go to bar" or any other location, eliminating the need to constantly refer to the map when moving around. The next location's name appears along with anything that just happened, and you merely press "c" to continue moving until you reach the bar. You may enter another command if you change your mind.

A CAST OF THOUSANDS

The emphasis is on the characters here, interacting with them and trying to figure out what's going on. And there are plenty of them to watch. You've got Michael (Veronica's husband), George Smythe (the butler), Colonel Marston (administrator of Veronica's trust fund), Richard (Veronica's younger brother) and Senator Asher. Then there's Alicia, Linda...even Deadline didn't get this crowded! And who is the mysterious guest in the devil suit? As in Deadline and Cutthroats,

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FAHRENHEIT 451

If you didn't read Ray Bradbury's novel and managed to miss the movie, 451 is about a fireman in the future. Working for a fascist government that rules America in the year 2067, the fire department burns books instead of putting out fires. The novel wound up with Guy Montag deserting the 451 Patrol to join the underground, people who memorized books to ensure they wouldn't be lost forever to the flames.

You play the role of Montag as he sets out to find the rebels in New York City, so the game is a continuation of the novel rather than strictly an adventurized version of the original story. Montag, a holographic wanted poster informs you, is the subject of a city-wide manhunt that is aided by deadly Mechanical Hellhounds. An old man outlines exactly what must be done in order to stay alive long enough to attain the ultimate goal of liberating a stockpile of books from the 451 Patrol. You've got to get a mask, a lighter, a new "chemindex", do something about your fingerprints, and find a contact named Ray. Because the 451 troopers and Hellhounds patrol the streets at regular intervals, there's a real-time aspect to the game, and you have to check the time frequently to avoid them. Also, a key rebel named Unger is only at home between certain hours, and some shops aren't always open.

YOU CAN CALL HIM RAY

The geography covers Fifth Avenue and two bordering streets, each about 20 blocks (locations) long. A subway and some underground tunnels are also available for getting around town. The rebels can be found in the stores, churches, hotels and other buildings that line the streets, but won't assist you unless you have the lighter as a signal that you're on their side. Most of them will provide more help if you quote the right lines from the book each has memorized. (This is basically a fancy version of the way Wizard and Princess and

other games employ magic words.) If you're stuck, try calling Ray, which is actually the personality of Ray Bradbury. "Ask about" an author, and Ray gives you the correct quotation. He'll also tell you things about himself, the real Bradbury, but the responses don't have anything to do with your questions. You also get to access Montag's memory, a unique ability in an adventure. This is done by typing "remember." A few fragments of his past appear. These are often evocative and quite poetic, especially the memories of his girl friend, whom he thinks died in a blaze set by the 451.

IS THERE A DOCTOR IN THE HOUSE?

The graphic presentation matches that of Dragonworld, and there are sound effects and music as well. No action games, though. Coded clues in the manual don't give the answers, but tell where to look for them. This is a unique and commendable way to dole out help, because you can't just race through the game by decoding the clues. Problems are object-oriented, with clues hidden the text, not the picture. The program is often inflexible. For example, to see the doctor, you must first answer "yes" to the nurse's question "Can I help you?", then tell her you're sick. After doing this once, you'd think that the next time she'd only have to be told that you are sick -- but this doesn't work. You always have to go through the same tedious routine. At least there aren't a lot of red herrings in this and the other Trillium games.

Another plus: you won't have to restart or restore a saved game to go back and get a crucial object that was missed in the first stage of the story. This happens frequently in adventures like Hitchhiker, in which you can't leave the Vogon ship and return to search Arthur's house for items that might solve the babel fish problem. A similar dilemma occurs in Blade of Blackpool, because the path from the first stage to the next is a one-way road -- so you've got to be positive you're finished in one area before advancing. In 451 you don't have to worry about this predicament. Like other Trillium games, there's no score. The parser is the same as described in the Dragonworld review.

Bradbury worked closely with scriptwriter Len Neufeld and the design team at Byron Preiss Video Publications, and wrote a lot of the actual text. As a result, it's some of the best you'll ever read in an adventure. There's no evidence of Trillium's idea of "character-based" situations and problems here, just a series of interlocked puzzles. Even so, you become more involved with the story and Montag's situation, because the troopers and their beasts keep killing you, producing a desire for revenge that proves more motivating than the simple desire to solve the game's problems. Fahrenheit 451 is easily the best science fiction scenario in Trillium's line-up, and may be their most engaging game. SA

Computer: APPLE, COMMODORE 64

Planned Conversions: MACINTOSH

Skill Level: Intermediate

Saves: 10

Price: \$39.95, Apple. \$32.95, Commodore

Manufacturer: Trillium Corp.

ZORK

Master the worlds of *ZORK I, II & III*, *INFIDEL*, *WITNESS*, *DEADLINE*, *SUSPENDED*, *ENCHANTER*, *STARCROSS*, *PLANETFALL*, *SORCERER*, *CUTTHROATS* and *ADVENTURE* with our maps and hint books. We won't spoil your fun. Also, the *ADVENTURER'S TUTORIAL* (tips and strategies for playing any Adventure game). Each book comes with multi-level hints and game map(s). All 3 *ZORKS* including *ADVENTURE* for \$18, or send \$6.95 for individual games, or get two games for \$10.95.

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! WAITING FOR DUFFY !

Duffy's at the diner, but if you're hopelessly stuck and need help, send in a brief description of the situation and we'll run it in the next issue.

Zapped by Xyphus: Does anyone know best combination of characters, if there are more than one Xiphoid in the first scenario, and how to kill the Werefalcons to the south? Duane Zumwalt, 7216 Wakefield Ct., Highland, CA 92346.

I will give \$5 to the first person who tells me how to finish the second scenario of Wizardry. I already have the armor and sword. Oliver Pike, 1150 Johnson Dr., Naperville, IL 60540.

Castle of Darkness: How do you get through the locked door past the room of fire? Scottie Freeman, Knott Route, Big Springs, TX 79720.

Been playing Zork III for 6 months -- am totally unable to find Dungeon Master. Can anyone help? P.S. I can help people on Sorcerer, Planetfall and some non-Infocom games. Mark Fujimoto, 1646 Komo Mai Dr., Pearl City, HI 96782.

Need a clue on how to drain the pool in Sands of Egypt. Don L. Zeiders, R. D. 2, Box 169-B, Millerstown, PA 17062.

SWAP SHOP

Got a trunkful of old adventures? Trade 'em off with a free ad in the next issue.

I have the following games for sale: The Wizard and the Princess (\$30), Ulysses and the Golden Fleece (\$30), a complete Eamon set (\$5), Prisoner and Prisoner II (\$15 each), Sheila (\$10), Galactic Revolution (\$35), Wizardry (\$35), and ET Phone Home Adventure (\$10). All are for Apple. Scottie Freeman, Knott Route, Big Springs, TX 79720.



LUCIFER'S REALM

Zork I has its Thief, Cranston Manor its killer toy soldier, and most adventures have at least one deadly villain. Lucifer's Realm is populated by more than its fair share, however, and the cast includes genuine bad guys like Adolf Hitler and Reverend Jim Jones, the mass murderer. They have one thing in common -- all are dead and now consigned to an eternity in Hell.

You get killed, too, in the opening sequence. From a hospital death bed, you go for Judgement in the clouds, and definitely don't get sent to Heaven. The next scene, where the game really begins, finds you on a ledge overlooking a fiery pit. The illustrations in this game are excellent, with rich colors and sharp hi-res graphics in every scene. Movement can be in any of four directions, but you won't go anywhere without solving the first problem. This leads to a billboard where Lucifer reveals the plot. Hitler, it seems, has raised an army to overthrow the devil. If you can help him defeat Hitler, he will set you free.

Problems are all object-oriented, with the usual ropes, lamps, and swords. (Magic words are thrown in, too.) But they are very tough problems. And you'll sometimes work for hours to get into a room, then immediately face another gamestopping situation. You don't get to interact with the people as in Cutthroats or other examples of true interactive fiction. Creeps like Adolf Eichmann and John Wilkes Booth simply block the doors, and will kill you if you hang around too long without figuring out how to get past them. (Appropriately, Jim Jones forces you to drink poison.) There is one unique advantage: because you're already dead, you can't really get killed. You merely start over at the ledge scene, and conveniently get to keep your entire inventory. It's a big world, so mapping is important. There are scattered sound effects, and no points or score. You cannot get hard copy of the game in progress.

The presentation matches that of The Institute,

for Lucifer's was created by the same team. (Produced/written by Jyym and Robyn Pearson; programmed by Jyym with Norm Sailor; graphics by Rick Incrocci.) Pictures are full-screen, but when you hit return or enter a command, it switches to an all-text screen that describes the room, visible objects and your inventory. If you examine an object or room, the description appears at the bottom of this screen. When an action produces a fresh picture, any new text can be seen under it. But you still have to jump back to the other screen to read out about visible items.

Commodore gamers will find that new pictures are loaded faster than with any other adventure -- five seconds flat. (For comparison: Trillium's C-64 games load new scenes in 10-30 seconds, Broderbund's Mask of the Sun takes 10-20 seconds, and Microfun's Death in the Caribbean eats up 15-20 seconds for each new picture.) You spend less time waiting, because the new graphics are loaded almost as quickly as the Apple version of most adventures. However, the two-word parser is disappointing. Multiple commands are not permitted. The limited vocabulary isn't uniform, so you must often use different words for the same action. This means that in some rooms you can say "u" to go up, while in others only "climb" will work. After getting past Eichmann, you see a "stone stairway to the east." But you cannot "go east" or "go stairway" -- only "climb" will get you there. Conversation is limited to saying "talk man" or "listen man." Many problems can only be solved with an exact set of words, requiring extra mental effort and synonym hunts. Anyone new to adventuring could find this exasperating. Masochistic veterans may relish the challenge. All will admire its brilliant graphics. C-64 owners in particular should explore Lucifer's Realm. NY

Computer: APPLE, COMMODORE 64

Planned Conversions: ATARI (48K)

Skill Level: Master Adventurers Only

Saves: 4 (on game disk)

Price: \$39.95

Manufacturer: American Eagle Software

👉 Win a Free Adventure!

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ACROSS

- 2 Sword in Blade of Blackpoole
- 4 Mask of Sun villain, Raoul _____
- 7 Transylvania's damsel in distress
- 8 Magic words from Colossal Cave
- 10 Biggest adventure, first name
- 12 Wrote Colossal Cave
- 15 Robot from Suspended
- 16 Wrote Deadline
- 18 Created "Breathtaking View"
- 19 The _____ Scrolls (Serpent's Star)
- 20 An adventure's interface
- 21 Evidence in The Witness

Entry with the most correct answers wins a free game. In case of ties, earliest postmark wins. Random drawing determines winner in case of another tie. Void where prohibited by law. Deadline is Jan 15, 1985. State type of computer.

DOWN

- 1 Evil king in Coveted Mirror
- 3 Spell from Sorcerer's arcade
- 5 A cave dweller
- 6 Zork I's troll has an _____
- 7 Gruds in _____
- 9 Biggest adventure, last name
- 11 Mike Berlyn's 1st adventure
- 13 Carries (synonym)
- 14 Wrote 1st graphic adventure
- 17 Bugblatter beast's home
- 18 Go _____
- 19 Redheaded wench in The Quest

ADVENTURE HOTLINE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

has joystick-control, and you can play one of five characters. It's based on a contemporary fairy tale trilogy. Reviews will follow in later issues, and Spinnaker has at least four more on the way, including Gulliver's Travels and Treasure Island. (Apple, Commodore, Atari, but only the Root for IBMers right now.) Rendezvous with Rama is also out, and will be reviewed next issue.

SHERLOCK HOLMES, THE ADVENTURE

Imagic's got a couple of professional writers working on graphic games. One is a new Sherlock Holmes mystery, Another Bow. The other is an adaptation of R.A. MacAvoy's fantasy trilogy, Damiano. (What? You never read it?) Activision is reportedly working on a couple of adventures, too. No, not an all-text version of Pitfall.

IT'S AN ENIGMA TO ME

Hey, what happened to Synapse's "Electronic Novels," rescheduled for a November release? Extensive playtesting, they say, and now hope to have them ready for Christmas.

INFOCOM UPDATE

In case you ripped the Hitchhiker package apart too quickly to notice, the folks at 55 Wheeler are now calling all their titles "interactive fiction." Just another name for adventure, they say, because so many other kinds of games are constantly being called adventures. Douglas Adams says his next Infocom title will be an original story, not another Hitchhiker. The Hitchhiker sequel will follow eventually. And at their New York City press conference, right before the fifteen-foot tv they'd planned to have the press play Hitchhiker's on BROKE DOWN, Steve Meretzky admitted that, "we started out making Hitchhiker's easy," and he cracked a devilish grin, "but near the end it gets very difficult." Actually, the huge tv never worked to begin with. So even Infocom has interfacing problems -- hey, why didn't anyone solve it, eh?

ZOOM CHANGES NAME -- AGAIN

In case you're wondering what happened to Zoom Software, who did Sherwood Forest and other great graphic games, their name is now American Eagle Software. They just released two new Apple games, Elysian Fields and Kukulkan. And their Lucifer's Realm is reviewed elsewhere in this issue.

AND THE WINNER IS...

Chris Ciccarello of Norcross, Georgia, won the November contest and a copy of Cutthroats. The correct answer was that the first adventure game was written by William Crowther, who says it was in 1967 or 1968. And he wrote it at a private research firm in Cambridge, Massachusetts, not at M.I.T. Don Woods reworked the game as Original Adventure while at Stanford in 1975-76.



NEW & PLANNED CONVERSIONS:

COMMODORE 64

Expedition Amazon, Xyphus (Penguin)
Serpent's Star (Broderbund)
Sherwood Forest, Masquerade (American Eagle)

IBM

The Quest (Penguin)

MACINTOSH

The Quest, MacXyphus, MacCoveted Mirror (Penguin)
Cyborg (Broderbund)
Amazon, Fahrenheit 451, Dragonworld, Shadowkeep, Rendezvous with Rama (Trillium)
Ultima III (Origin)

ATARI

Transylvania (Penguin)

SUSPECT

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

you'll be told the locations and movements of everyone in the same room. Something is always happening, and it helps to pay close attention at all times. You'll find more motives than clues strewn about the landscape. Richard stands to inherit the trust fund with Veronica dead, and Cochrane now has a chance to buy the house. Yes, it turns out she was planning to sell the estate and move upstate. But the killer struck before she signed the contract. Snoopy detectives will soon find this and other incriminating documents without much trouble. The mindgrinder is piecing the elements together to figure out who killed Veronica -- and, of course, finding enough evidence to convince the detective that you didn't do it.

Duffy will still analyze objects, but you must first ask the detective to do it. He sends Duffy to the lab; to hear the report, you've got to be near the detective when Duffy returns. The cop's not particularly bright. You can remove the lariat, the key evidence against you, before he arrives. Drop it on the floor later and the detective walks past it without blinking, though he's already examined the body and knows she was strangled. Hide it, though, and this suspicious act will be brought up in court.

The game recognizes more than 700 words, but seemed to falter in an atypical manner at least once. Type "jump ribbon" at the stairs, and you'll be told to "Please try rephrasing that." Infocom's parser usually points out the problem word or syntax in a flawed command. Even so, it's still state-of-the-parser for the industry.

GRUES, TOO?

Humorous touches abound. Lebling, who wrote Starcross (and co-authored the mainframe Zork, the Zork trilogy, and Enchanter), managed to sneak in a grue and a reference to the Frobozz Magic Company. Beyond a scribbled note on a genuine business card from Cochrane's real estate company, the documentation does not appear to conceal any solid clues. A page torn from a local

magazine offers an article quoting Cochrane about the local real estate situation, plus background on Veronica and Colonel Marston. You also get a formal invitation to the party, and the receipt for your costume. A clever instruction manual, "Murder and Modern Manners," satirizes Emily Post-type books.



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As far as difficulty goes, Infocom rates the game as Advanced, one step below their Expert rating for Deadline. (This coincides exactly with the QB rating system, though we refer to the hardest games as for "Master Adventurers Only.") Suspect is still a tough game, and can be maddening when you run out of time. (You can buy an extra hour or so by locating a particular piece of evidence, at least.) It's not your typical "look rock" and "climb rope" adventure, and anyone who hasn't finished Witness would be getting in over their heads here. Suspect works as true interactive fiction, too. The characters are convincing, and the suspense intensifies each time the detective or Duffy approach you when there are only moments remaining and you just know onto a hot lead. Speaking of hot leads, we don't usually give out clues. This is such a difficult game, though, it's an exception to the rule. So if you're really stuck, try looking under the Oriental rug in Veronica's sitting room. SA

Computer: Most Home Computers

Skill Level: Advanced

Saves: 8

Price: \$39.95, Atari & C-64; \$44.95, others

Manufacturer: Infocom, Inc.

✉ READER MAIL ✉

Dear QB:

Wasn't there supposed to be a review of Lucifer's Realm in the November issue?

Ron Siegel

When a game arrives too late for the scheduled issue, it will usually be covered in the next one.

Dear QB:

I enjoyed your November issue, and want to subscribe. Here in Japan, adventures are very popular, but not the text games. Most enjoy the graphics. I prefer Infocom's games, even though English is a foreign language for us. Actually, I can't comprehend the meaning of some sentences now and then. But I can enjoy it!

Hisashi Kurokawa

Dear QB:

What is the story on the "skill levels" you use in the game reviews?

Alice Jenkins

Introductory is self-explanatory. Novice level games are for people who've solved at least two or three games on their own or with some help. Intermediate level games are for those who have finished several adventures want more of a challenge. Really difficult games are in the Advanced category. Those for Masters Adventurers Only may take the most experienced gamer months to complete. Don't let skill levels scare you away from a game that sounds appealing. You can always run a free ad in QB.

FREE GAMES!

Every issue of QuestBustersSM features a contest in which you have a chance to win a new adventure game. (Grues, gruds and their relatives are prohibited from entering any QB contests.)

FREE ADS!

The Swap Shop section is the perfect place to trade or sell your old adventures. Subscribers can simply send in their ads and we run them free.

NEXT ISSUE:

What kind of adventures can you expect from a company like Activision, famous for Pitfall and other Atari VCS games? Find out when we take a look at some pre-release versions of *both* their graphic adventures. Return of Werdna, the 4th Wizardry scenario, will be the lead review -- if Sir-Tech releases it on schedule. And we'll report on Broderbund's Mac version of Mike Berlyn's Cyborg and a C-64 version of Serpent's Star. Also: Trillum's Rendezvous with Rama and Shadowkeep; Timeship and Ripper will be ready; and look for Elysian Fields, Legacy, and Adventure Construction Set. Everyone is waiting on Synapse's Electronic Novels, but you'll read about it first in QB when they are finally released.

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